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RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 2511
RUEHKN/AMEMBASSY KOLONIA PRIORITY 0003
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY 2693
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY 9064
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 9051
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0701
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 2210
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 0106
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 5031
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 SEOUL 002166

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KDEM PGOV PHUM KS

SUBJECT: ROK EMBRACES ITS ROLE AS CHAIR OF FIRST APDP SOM

REF: A. SEOUL 1757 ("NO" TO HOSTING)
 1B. ULAANBAATAR 0331 (PLANNING MEETING)

11. (U) Summary: The Republic of Korea hosted and chaired the first Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) of the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) in Seoul on October 31, 2008. Twelve countries participated: Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the ROK, Thailand (observer), Timor Leste, and the U.S. Malaysia was invited but did not attend. The U.S. was represented by DRL A/S David Kramer. The ROK's agreement to host the meeting and serve as chair until the next SOM, proposed for fall 2009, is indicative of Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan's belief that the ROK should play a more active regional and global role promoting and protecting democracy. The day-long series of well-managed and collegial meetings produced agreements on:

-- supporting elections in the region as the APDP's primary near-term priority, beginning with the observation of Bangladesh's December elections,

-- the ROK leading a process for defining the APDP's mission and membership terms,

-- the U.S. managing the drafting of guidelines for APDP election observation missions,

-- holding an Inter-Sessional Meeting (subject to confirmation) on the margins of the Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Lisbon, Portugal, tentatively scheduled for July 2009, and

-- holding an annual SOM meeting. End Summary.

The ROK Embracing a Leadership Role

12. (SBU) Foreign Minister Yu, in a keynote opening address, noted the lack of a "multilateral cooperation mechanism devoted to the promotion of democracy" in the Asia-Pacific

region and urged the APDP to fill the gap. Yu attributed Korea's democratic and economic success since the Korean War to the Korean people's desire for democracy and indispensable assistance from the international community. Welcoming the opportunity to host and chair the first APDP SOM, Yu said, "Having come a long and hard way, Korea now strives to do its part in the global efforts to further spread and promote democracy." Despite initial bureaucratic reluctance to hosting the meeting (Ref A), the ROK not only did an outstanding job preparing for the meetings, but energized the whole process by agreeing to continue serving as APDP chair until the next SOM.

¶13. (U) The SOM was divided into three sessions: the APDP's mandate, structure, and next steps. Following is a brief summary of each session, the text of the "Chair's Summary", and the list of heads of delegations.

APDP: Mandate

¶14. (U) Participants agreed on the importance of the APDP focusing on practical, action-oriented tasks as a means of defining the APDP's mandate and developing its partnership. All agreed that support for regional democratic elections should be the APDP's primary focus. APDP election observation missions and election-related capacity building initiatives were identified as near-term priorities. Participants agreed to consider sending election observation

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missions wherever invited in the region, including to APDP non-member countries.

APDP: Structure

¶15. (U) The second session raised the issue of APDP membership criteria. Participants agreed to postpone a decision on whether and when to expand APDP and invite other Pacific democracies, like Mexico, Chile, or Peru, to participate. The more immediate issue was whether the APDP would be inclusive of countries which are not members of the Community of Democracies (CD). The ROK and the U.S. took the position that making CD membership a prerequisite would confer a clearly-defined, easily-explained purpose and composition on the APDP. Others, including Australia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, expressed support for including non-CD countries such as Singapore. Ultimately there was a consensus that until more formal membership criteria were adopted, CD membership would be considered &an important factor8 in determining APDP membership. Moreover, if any of the founding APDP partners wish to include other countries in future activities, the meeting participants agreed to notify the APDP Chair who would, in turn, determine whether any APDP partners object.

¶16. (U) Participants agreed in principle to hold annual SOMs and, as needed, to hold Inter-Sessional meetings. It was also agreed that Working Groups would work informally between meetings to prepare recommendations for SOM approval or to implement decisions of the SOM.

APDP: Next Steps

¶17. (U) Although none of the meeting participants offered to host the next SOM, there was agreement in principle to hold an Inter-Sessional Meeting on the margins of the Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Lisbon, Portugal, tentatively scheduled for July 2009. The ROK will continue as chair until the next SOM. (NB: The ROK asked Indonesia and the Philippines in advance whether either would

be willing to host the next SOM. Indonesia indicated it would not; the Philippines will consider the request in Manila.)

¶18. (U) In preparation for the Inter-Sessional, the ROK will lead a Working Group to draft an APDP Mission Statement, which will include APDP's mandate, structure and membership criteria. The U.S. will lead a Working Group to draw up election observation guidelines and procedures.

¶19. (U) Assuming invitations from host governments, participants agreed to support sending APDP election observation missions to observe Bangladesh's December elections and Micronesia's March elections. Australia cautioned that a decision on observing Fiji's upcoming elections should be delayed until there is confirmation that Fiji's government will allow for free and fair elections.

Chair's Summary

¶10. (U) Chair's Summary of the meeting:

Begin Text:

¶11. The First Senior Officials, Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) was held in Seoul, Korea on 31 October 2008. The following 12 countries attended the

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Meeting: Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and the United States. Thailand participated in the Meeting as an observer. The Meeting was chaired by the Republic of Korea.

¶12. Recalling the Chairs, Summary of the APDP Planning Meeting that was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 1 July 2008, the participating countries discussed the major issues relating to the APDP, including mandate, structure, and next steps.

¶13. With regard to the APDP mandate, the participating countries

(1) Reaffirmed the agreements reached at the Planning Meeting that the APDP should focus on practical activities to promote democracy in the Asia-Pacific region.

(2) Supported the continuation of dispatching election observation missions, upon invitation or acceptance by receiving countries, to the countries in the Asia-Pacific, including non-member states, as a core component of the APDP mandate.

(3) Supported the inclusion of election-related capacity building as part of the APDP mandate, and recognized the importance of incorporating such activities in development cooperation programs on a voluntary basis.

(4) Agreed to voluntarily hold workshops on democracy-related issues as part of the APDP mandate.

(5) Acknowledged the need to draw up a Mission Statement of the APDP which would contain its overall objectives, mandate and structure, with a view to adopting a Mission Statement at the next Senior Officials, Meeting.

(6) Stressed the importance of the role of civil society in the activities of the APDP, including election-related capacity building and workshops on democracy-related issues.

(7) Stressed the importance of cooperation between the APDP and other regional initiatives, with a view to making their activities mutually complementary.

(8) Agreed to continue the discussion on other issues that may be considered as part of the APDP mandate at the next Inter-Sessional Meeting and/or at the next Senior Officials, Meeting.

¶4. With regard to the APDP structure, the participating countries

(1) Discussed the issue of membership criteria, and in light of the different opinions on how strong a linkage there should be between the APDP membership and the CD membership, recognized the following elements as ad-hoc guidelines for expanding the membership of the APDP, until agreement is reached on membership criteria.

- A member should be geographically located in the Asia-Pacific region, and commit itself to democracy.
- Membership of the Community of Democracies is considered as an important factor.
- The existing members may recommend a candidate for new membership to be considered by a Senior Officials, Meeting.

(2) Agreed that a Senior Officials, Meeting is held annually on the basis of a rotating chairmanship among members to discuss major policies of the APDP, and that the term of the APDP Chair is from the time of hosting of the Senior

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Officials, Meeting to the next Senior Officials, Meeting.

(3) Agreed that an Inter-Sessional Meeting is held, when necessary, at the level of Senior Officials or their Deputies between Senior Officials, Meetings to follow-up on the decisions reached by the previous Senior Officials, Meeting and to prepare for the next Senior Officials, Meeting.

(4) Agreed on the need of a Steering Group composed of the former, the current and the next Chairs, which may be created in due course to maintain continuity and consistency between Chairs.

(5) Agreed to establish Working Groups to map out specific and detailed steps necessary to implement the decisions reached at a Senior Officials, Meeting.

(6) Acknowledged that the funding for attendance at APDP meetings and participation in APDP activities should basically be borne by each participating country.

¶5. With regard to the next steps for the APDP, the participating countries

(1) Agreed to continue to dispatch election observation missions to the countries in the Asia-Pacific, starting with the election to be held in Bangladesh in December 2008, subject to an invitation by the Bangladesh government and to consider the possibility of sending election observation missions to other upcoming elections in the region.

(2) Agreed in principle to hold an Inter-Sessional Meeting on the margins of the Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Lisbon, Portugal, tentatively scheduled for the first half of 2009, subject to confirmation by the home governments in the case of some member states.

(3) Agreed to establish two working groups on an informal and ad hoc basis) one on the APDP Mission Statement and Membership, and the other on election observation guidelines) that will prepare and circulate a draft Mission Statement and a draft election observation guideline, by the next Inter-Sessional Meeting.

(4) Welcomed the suggestions by some members to hold workshops, including the one to follow up on the recommendations made by the APDP Election Observation Mission to Mongolia.

(5) Agreed that when a suggestion is made to invite a non-APDP member(s) to take part in the activities of the APDP, the suggestion should be circulated to all members by the Chair and not opposed by any member.

¶16. The participating countries expressed gratitude to the government of the Republic of Korea for hosting the First Senior Officials, Meeting of the APDP.

End Text.

Heads of Delegations

¶11. (U) Heads of Delegations:

ROK, Chair: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister for Multilateral, Global and Legal Affairs Oh Joon
Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, First Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, Information Management and Services Division Sam Gerovich
Canada: Charge de Affairs Jess Dutton
India: Ambassador to the ROK Skand R. Tayal

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Indonesia: Department of Foreign Affairs, Head of Policy Planning and Development Agency Artauli Tobing
Japan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Policy Division Official for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau
Mongolia: Member of Parliament and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Oyun Sanjaasuren
New Zealand: Deputy Head of Mission Jane Mulryan
Thailand (observer): Minister Counselor Pornpong Kanittanon
Timor Leste: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Vicky Tchong
Philippines: Ambassador to the ROK Luis T. Cruz
U.S.: Department of State, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor David Kramer

Comment

¶12. (SBU) The ROK's decision to host the first APDP SOM was a top-down directive from the Blue House and FM Yu, which apparently caught MOFAT off guard (Ref A). Nevertheless, Deputy Minister Oh and his staff took ownership of the responsibility and did a superb job preparing the ground for a productive set of meetings. Despite initial reluctance to being out front on an initiative that risks offending non-invited neighbors, like China, FM Yu and DFM Oh were, during the meetings, articulate about Korea being well-suited for taking on this kind of regional leadership role. The ROK is to be congratulated for a job well done. As a result of the ROK's efforts, APDP is now a sustainable partnership with the potential to contribute to the consolidation and expansion of democratic institutions in the region.

¶13. (U) The U.S. delegation cleared this message.
STEPHENNS